

F 1234

D13

Copy 2



7.6  
F 1234

.D13

Copy 2

# A Star of Hope for Mexico

By **CHARLES WILLIAM DABNEY**

President of the University of Cincinnati



Distribution of Prizes to Kindergarten Children in Mexico City, D. F.

*Published by*

**LATIN-AMERICAN NEWS ASSOCIATION**

**1400 Broadway, New York City**

1916

F1234  
 .D13  
 copy 2

# Does Mexico Interest You?

Then you should read the following pamphlets:

What the Catholic Church Has Done for Mexico, by Doctor Paganel .....	\$0.10
The Agrarian Law of Yucatán.....	
The Labor Law of Yucatán.....	
International Labor Forum.....	0.15
Intervene in Mexico, Not to Make, but to End War, urges Mr. Hearst, with reply by Rolland.....	
The President's Mexican Policy, by F. K. Lane.....	
The Religious Question in Mexico.....	0.10
A Reconstructive Policy in Mexico.....	
Manifest Destiny .....	
What of Mexico.....	0.10
Speech of General Alvarado.....	
Many Mexican Problems.....	
Charges Against the Díaz Administration.....	0.10
Carranza .....	
Stupenduous Issues .....	
Minister of the Catholic Cult.....	0.10
Star of Hope for Mexico.....	
Land Question in Mexico.....	
Open Letter to the Editor of the Chicago Tribune, Chicago, Ill. How We Robbed Mexico in 1848, by Robert H. Howe.....	0.10
What the Mexican Conference Really Means.....	
The Economic Future of Mexico.....	

*We also mail any of these pamphlets upon receipt of 5c each.*

*Address all communications to*

**LATIN-AMERICAN NEWS ASSOCIATION**  
**1400 Broadway, New York City**

Gift

Mrs Wm. H. Baldwin



# A Star of Hope for Mexico

By CHARLES WILLIAM DABNEY

President of the University of Cincinnati, in "The Outlook"



What can we do for México? In the first place, we can try to understand her. We cannot expect to help Mexico effectually until we first understand her people and their history, institutions, and aspirations. What, then, does the history of Mexico teach us? What, for example, is the meaning of the series of revolutions which have been going on in that country for the last hundred years?

These revolutions, including this last long one, have all, at bottom, been phases of a blind misguided struggle of a strong, ignorant people for liberty. They sprang from a desire of the common people to realize the benefits of democracy, whose catchwords had reached even to them, but whose terms they only vaguely understood. They constitute a contest against a feudal system approaching slavery. They were chiefly, although not entirely, the strivings of an oppressed people to win for themselves and their children a small place upon the soil of their native land.

These blind efforts have failed of their ends largely because of the ignorance of the people and the lack of true and unselfish leaders. There has never been a middle class in Mexico to supply leaders for the people in their struggle with the feudal lords. Organized public opinion is the only basis for democratic government, and this has never existed in Mexico. The only newspapers are controlled by the Government, by the landlords, or by the big corporations. There are no real political parties. The only politics are wholly personal, and the only political organizations are gangs formed to advance the interests of leaders whose names they bear. There are no political campaigns to educate the voters, but only processions and rallies intended to impress them. There is, in fact, no free political discussion of any kind. Elections in Mexico, consequently, are either farces or frauds.

Organized public opinion and the free discussion of political

affairs so necessary to free government cannot exist where the masses of the people are ignorant. The only solution of the Mexican problem, therefore, will be through the establishment of public schools which will educate the people to know their rights, and train men to lead them in their struggles to win these rights.

Most people think that the largest part of the Mexican population is a mixed race of Spanish and Indian blood. The Mexican census is inaccurate and incomplete. As Mexicans of any intelligence desire to be considered as having European blood, the returns with regard to parentage or race cannot be relied upon. The best authorities tell us that we mestizos, or people of Spanish-Indian blood, are not over forty per cent., and that the people of pure European blood are certainly not twenty per cent. of the whole. The people of pure and mixed European blood together constitute thus only about sixty per cent., or six million of the fifteen million souls in Mexico to-day. The nine million Indians, more or less, constitute some fifty aboriginal tribes in various stages of semi-civilization—and some still in savagery—distributed all over the country from Sonora to Yucatan. This vast area of Mexican territory contains only about twenty persons to the square mile. Were it populated as densely as portions of the United States, Mexico would support a hundred million people. Vast arid regions render this impossible, but it could readily support four times its present population.

The Spanish invaders and their later followers brought a marvelous mixture of blood into Mexico. Spain was the great melting-pot of the Old World's peoples—Iberian, Roman, Celtic, Vandal, Goth, and Semitic—and sent all these strains to mix with the hundreds of Indian races supposed to have come originally from Asia. If the blending of a variety of strong bloods makes a great people, Mexico should be a powerful nation.

The Mexican people have always been sharply divided into an upper and a lower class, there being practically no middle class, and no room for one under the present agrarian system. The peons and Indians—people without land of their own—make up perhaps eighty per cent. of the population of Mexico, or twelve millions out of the fifteen.

In judging this people we must also take into consideration the experiences through which they have passed in the centuries since the Spanish conquest. After the army of Cortez had swept the country and divided the land and the surviving Indians among his followers, they and their successors, the Government and the Church, combined to suck all the life-blood they could out of the people. Aside from ineffective protest, the Church acquiesced in this exploitation or openly shared its proceeds, although it did soften its worst horrors. The material resources of the country were partially developed. Cities and haciendas were established and mines opened, but the wealth from both farm and mine was poured into Spain.

Under Spanish dominion the education of the people of Mexico was resisted and retarded by many powerful influences. The landlords, the mining and lumber companies, preferred ignorant laborers because they were easier to exploit. The peon was a mere unit of physical force, a "hand," and they wanted to keep him such. All employers, therefore, united to keep him in ignorance. Monastic and other religious organizations flourished, but they did little to educate the people. The theologians even questioned whether the natives had intellects like other people, and the whites and mixed-bloods came to be spoken of as *gente de razon*—people with reason—as distinguished from the Indians, who were supposed to have none. By farming out taxation and selling grants and privileges the viceroys, governors, and other Spanish officials added their burdens to those of the State and Church, and the unfortunate people bore them all.

The social organization, consisting only of the exploiters and the exploited, though somewhat fluid at first, under this government soon hardened into tradition. Life for the poor man was without incentive or hope, and for three centuries the history of the Mexican was the dead level of uneventfulness. Under such conditions ten generations labored and passed away. Such experiences inevitably made a deep and lasting impression upon the character of the people. They not only widened the social chasm, they weakened and debased the man, making submissiveness a habit and resistance impossible. With no motive in life except to eat, drink, and propagate his miserable kind, the common Mexican became idle, sensual, and brutal, the spirit of *manana* ruled his life, and a profound fatalism locked his spirit in death.

Under the system of *repartimientos* the lands were originally divided among those who merited well of the Crown, and the native people were seized along with the land and made to work for the new owner as slaves. This system was so grossly abused that it had to be abandoned, and then a more polite way of accomplishing the same thing was introduced. This was the plan of *encomiendas*, under which a certain number of Indians were "commended" to the landowner, to be civilized and Christianized by him. He promptly enslaved the whole lot, binding them to his land, which they could not leave so long as they were in debt. This system had for the proprietor all the advantages of slavery as it existed in the United States, without its obligations.

Many efforts were made to abolish this system, but without success. The missionaries from the old country denounced it, some of the viceroys condemned it; but it was profitable to all governing classes, and it kept the Indians in order. Working was good for the souls of the peons. Left to themselves, they would wander about the country, gamble and fight. So even the priests were brought to think well of the plan. The land yielded a living easily. In that fine climate the simplest houses and fewest clothes sufficed. Why should the priests trouble

themselves to educate the Indian? He was happy as he was. After a generation or two of monks had passed away the local churches came under the control of a native priesthood almost as ignorant as their parishioners. The ceremonies of the Church degenerated into the crudest formalities wrapped in the crassest superstitions derived from previous Indian practices. There were a few private schools for the sons of the rich, a few institutes for professional training, and a few seminaries for priests, but no public schools, no schoolhouses, no teachers, and no funds provided to educate the masses. Occasionally there was a parochial school in which the catechism and the lives of the saints were taught by rote, but these schools rarely ever taught the children to read. Under these conditions the people drifted gently down the stream of years in contented ignorance.

As is always the way, the social distinctions between chiefs and common Indians, between Spanish landlords and peasant *mestizos*, settled down upon the criterion of wealth. Most of the Indian *caciques* dropped into the lower class, as did the unsuccessful Spanish. The descendants of the *hidalgo*, as well as of his soldiers, failing to acquire lands or mines, slid down the social scale along with their half-blood kin into the great conglomerate mass of poor at the bottom. The constituents of this mass became each year more and more indistinguishable. By the time of the national emancipation, therefore, a population of five or six millions had been stratified into an upper and a lower class, and of the total at least nine-tenths belonged to the lower class. All elements are represented in the upper class; all bloods are found in the lower class. The Mexican people are practically one. The classes differ only as they have enjoyed opportunity and have used it. The only differences are in possessions or in traits resulting from opportunity or the long want of it.

In studying the last one hundred years of Mexico's political development one must keep this dark background in mind. These conditions, as well as the nature of the people and the institutions fastened upon them by their conquerors, must all be considered in interpreting the period of liberation which opened for Mexico, as for all Latin America, in the early years of the nineteenth century. In all our judgments of Latin-American people, present as well as past, let us be fair and remember who they were and what they have suffered. Anglo-Saxons are inclined to be too conceited and arrogant. We should remember, for example, that the Latin conquerors preserved as slaves the native races, instead of killing them off or driving them out, and we should also remember that it was not the makers of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, but the founders of the Inquisition, who gave the Latin-Americans their first governments.

The desire for enlightenment everywhere and always follows the struggle for liberty. So we find that the intellectual movement in Mexico received its first great impulse from Hidalgo



in 1810, and progressed throughout the century by ebb and flow as the political revolutions came and went. Though each political uprising awakened the minds of the people, the actual progress of enlightenment under the conditions described was necessarily very low. After experiences such as the people of Mexico had endured it was not possible for mere political liberation to transform them in a day or a decade into intelligent, self-governing citizens. Many of them were still semi-civilized Indians, and nine-tenths were absolutely ignorant at the opening of this era. What had been three centuries in the making could not be undone in one hundred years.

The general movement for freedom in Latin-America was awakened by the successful war for independence of the English colonies in America and tremendously stimulated by the French Revolution. The times were then ripe in Europe, and the prepared peoples seized the opportunity to win new liberties. But the people of Latin America were not ready; the oppression of centuries had trained them so long to submission that they were dazed in the presence of the opportunity. When Napoleon paralyzed Europe, the shackles fell from Mexico almost without her knowing it. Thus Mexico got her independence too soon and too easily. The clock of destiny struck too early for her.

For years the people of Mexico had been restless; they wanted something better, but they did not understand this thing called independence, with which the world was ringing. Mexico in the nineteenth century resembled one of her ancient volcanoes. The fierce heat lay smouldering within her rock-bound sides; an occasional upheaval, accompanied by a few deep murmurings, relieved the pressure temporarily, but the central fires remained smothered. The great eruption did not come until the middle of the century.

Some weeks ago the Pan-American Scientific Congress concluded its second meeting in Washington. The one note that ran through all the papers and addresses at this Congress was the unity of America and the duty of its different peoples to stand together. It is interesting to trace the origin of this idea of unity in the support of free government throughout America. Such ideas grow with the years, and it is not possible that exactly this conception of the duty of the various nationalities to each other and the world should be held by any American in these early days. But the root-idea that America as a whole stood for the right to self-government had existed in the minds of the seers for at least a hundred years. This was the covenant preserved in the American ark, and to the defense of this covenant all Americans were forever dedicated. This was the continental thought of the men in '76, and this has been the inspiring principle in every declaration of independence published on this hemisphere. As far as I have been able to learn, the most significant early expression in Latin-America of this idea of Pan-Americanism was in the plan of the Spanish revolutionist

Miranda for the **Grande Reunion Americana**, a secret society organized, 1800 to 1810, for the purpose of uniting the people of Central and South America in a struggle for independence.

Undoubtedly Father Hidalgo, the first Mexican liberator, had heard of Miranda. "El grito de Dolores," the cry from the City of Sorrows, as the independence call of Hidalgo was designated, was the first utterance in Mexico of this Pan-American idea. This call was, "Long live America! Death to bad government!" Hidalgo did not say, "Long live Mexico! Death to Spain!" but "Long live America," Pan-America, the anticipated home of good government, as opposed to the Old World, the home of bad government. History tells us that he declared for the independence of Mexico as a part of self-governing America. Like our Declaration, it indeed was the demand of an oppressed people for the right to govern themselves, but it was also an expression of the ideal of Pan-America, destined to be the hemisphere of democracy.

Desperately angered by the interference of the Government with his efforts to teach the people letters and industry—for he had been instructing them in reading and figures and training them to rear silkworms and to make pottery—Father Hidalgo, of Dolores, on a September Sunday morning in 1810 summoned his pupil horticulturists and potters, forced the village prison, liberated the political prisoners, rang the parish bell, and called the people, in the name of Him who came to bring all men abundant life, to declare themselves free. Thus was sounded, by a representative of the Saviour of men, the Liberty Bell of Mexico. The spirit of the first democrat was moving his people.

The beginnings of this century-long struggle have been recited for the purpose of emphasizing the fact that these were genuine uprisings of a people seeking liberty and opportunity, although seeking it blindly, and for the purpose of explaining the occasion for the next great proclamation of Pan-Americanism. Iturbide sought to gain support for his selfish schemes by declaring that there was on foot a plan for the reestablishment of Spanish authority in Mexico which it was his duty to prevent. Whether any such scheme existed is doubtful, but the belief that it did had an important influence in bringing the support of the United States to the new Republic. In his message of December, 1823, President Monroe, therefore, made that epoch-making utterance warning European governments forever to keep their hands off the American continent. The significance of the doctrine, understood originally to be for the United States only, we are just beginning to appreciate in its continental aspects. The events of the last two decades have shown us the wisdom of this forgotten doctrine, which now promises to be the foundation stone of the structure of our Pan-American union. Buoyed up by this declaration, the independent government of Mexico set out upon a career which, though often in desperate danger from violent reactions, has gone steadily forward.

For the generation following, the evil genius of Mexico was Santa Anna, who overthrew its constitutional guarantees and involved it in difficulties with the United States, and then left it in a condition of anarchy.

Juarez, the little Indian of Oaxaca, was the most unselfish, wisest and bravest of all the Mexican patriots. He was the real liberator of Mexico, and the real founder of her school system. A Constitution modeled after ours was proclaimed by him. A series of laws known as "Reform Laws" were passed, guaranteeing liberty of worship, separation of Church and State, and equality before the law for priest, soldier, and common man. A vigorous mortmain law aimed at the immense holdings of the religious orders was enacted.

It is impressive to note that Juarez understood perfectly the distinction between the rights of the Church and the rights of the people. His struggle was not against the humble parish priests, but against the higher clergy and the far too numerous religious orders. It was against the hierarchy, the successors of the men who in the colonial days had been the counselors of the kings, viceroys, and commissions, and who held tenaciously to the idea that they ought to share in governing the people, that Juarez fought, and not against the Church of the people.

Though the early leaders in the movement for independence were earnest partisans of popular education, and passed some elaborate laws for its establishment, they failed to carry them out. Perhaps it was impossible at the time. The Constitution of 1824, copied after the American Constitution, and establishing universal democracy, was wholly unsuited to Mexican conditions. The American Constitution was a compact entered into voluntarily by States having had previous separate existences, and made up of Anglo-Saxon men already trained in self-government. The Mexican States had no such history and no such citizens. They were States only in name. The government had always been strongly and autocratically Centralist, and to such a country and such a people the American Constitution was absolutely unadapted.

The responsibility of self-government was conferred upon an illiterate and untrained mass of people, a large proportion of them practically slaves. When they were freed from Spanish control, nine-tenths were still under the heel of landlords. "No nation can exist half slave and half free," said Lincoln. With the masses still in serfdom Mexico made no progress in democracy.

The struggles in Mexico since 1810 have been one long contest between the forces of autocracy and democracy. The various parties have borne many names and have had many confusing associations, but have remained substantially the same two hosts—the army, the Church, the landlords, and mine-owners on the one side, and the mass of the people, for the most part landless and moneyless, on the other. One phase of this was the contest between the Centralists and the Federalists. During this struggle

the question of which power, the national or the State, should be responsible for education was earnestly discussed. As, however, the political centre of gravity was constantly shifting from one to the other of these conflicting powers, nothing was decided and little done.

Another difficulty was the poverty of the treasuries of both the States and the nation. Continuous revolutions had left the people in a wretched condition and almost without funds. **Haciendas**, churches, and towns were alike stripped of every form of wealth—the people were bled white by war.

Such conditions gave the national government the excuse to turn over the financing and control of the schools to the States and the weak and impoverished States proceeded immediately to pass the business on to the **municipios**, which, like our New England towns, covered large country districts. Nothing was accomplished by this shifting of responsibility. If the nation was bankrupt, the States were also exhausted; and, if the States had no money, the towns from which they derived their revenues were, of course, equally impoverished. So that, even after the authority was given them to establish schools, the towns were unable to support the stupendous undertaking.

In face, however, of these tremendous difficulties, some beginnings were made, which show how deeply the people were concerned. It is a remarkable fact that in the law promulgated by the State of Nuevo Leon (1825) the principle of compulsory attendance on schools was laid down. Professor Martinez, in his "Review of Education in Nuevo Leon," Mexico (1894), quotes this Constitution as commanding the city government "to promote the proper education of the young and establish endowed schools of primary grade, to see to the due conservation and right government of those already in existence, respecting always the rights of individuals and corporations." The same Constitution directs that in all villages primary schools should be established, in which should be taught "reading, writing, and the principles of numbers, the catechism of the Christian doctrine, and a summary explanation of the duties of citizenship." It is only within the last few years that we have introduced instruction in civics in our schools.

Another great difficulty faced these early school enthusiasts, and this was the lack of teachers. To solve this problem the Mexicans seized upon the Lancasterian system of teaching the elementary branches, which was popular at the time in England and in America. It seemed to suit their conditions exactly, and, as a matter of fact, it did fit in with their impracticable schemes. It was the old monitorial system carried to the extreme. It proved a failure in Mexico, as it did everywhere, though it did some good by calling attention to the duty of educating all the people.

Among the things for which the administration of President Diaz should receive credit were the suppression of religious persecution and anti-foreign demonstrations; the suppression

of brigandage, always a characteristic of Mexico; the development of the natural resources of the country, especially by the policy of encouraging investments by Americans and other foreign capitalists; the consolidation and improvement of the railways; the partial abolition of peonage; the standardization of the currency; the encouragement of education; and the maintenance of liberty and equality before the law.

Though at the beginning a sincere representative of the masses of the people, Diaz, as his administration went on, became more and more involved with the upper classes. He has even been accused of being unfriendly to public education. He certainly did not wish to make education a national matter, and opposed a proposition to establish a centralized system of schools. In this he was right. The initiative in educational matters, in elementary education especially, should be left to the local authorities.

In spite of opposition from his own people, who thought he was altogether too partial to foreign investors, Diaz pushed the policy of subsidies for railway lines, exemption of import duties on factory machinery, and relief from taxation during specified periods for productive industries. The result was great improvement in the economic conditions of the laboring classes, especially in the mining districts. But the wants of the people began to grow with their wages, and they began to question and to investigate. For centuries they had expected nothing and were resigned to a miserable lot, but now their very prosperity made them restless. They commenced to inquire why it was that a few men had more land than they needed, while others had none, and why taxation was so much heavier on the poor man than on the rich.

The Diaz Government found itself unable to solve the problem of taxation and land tenure. Those efforts proved a failure which sought to put a rate upon the immense holdings of land that would make them unprofitable, and thus open them up for settlement by the small farmers. The mere effort to do this caused great dissatisfaction among the land barons, and its failure bitter disappointment to the people. Such were the elements that led up to the Madero revolution of 1911.

The unfortunate Madero's part in this struggle is well known. More truly than any one since Hidalgo and Juarez, he represented the real people of Mexico. While he made the land question the chief one in his platform—much to his sorrow later, for he was totally unable to do anything to solve the agrarian problem—he also represented the aspirations of Mexicans for education and equality. Like Hidalgo, he was a dreamer. We admired his idealism and felt deep pity for his weakness.

Enough has been recalled to show that this series of Mexican revolutions has been one long struggle for liberty, for opportunity, especially on the land, and for the right of self-government. It was a succession of forward movements followed by reactions,

but, as is the rule in human affairs, a little progress was registered by each effort.

Summarizing now the educational situation in Mexico at the present time, we may set down the following propositions:

1. The present leaders of the people are thoroughly committed to the cause of public education. The Constitutionalist party and its leader are pledged to the development of the schools.

2. It is agreed that the initiative shall be left to the local committees, the *municipios*, and the States perhaps, with the supervision and direction from the national Government, but with no centralized control.

3. The people are firmly determined that these schools shall be, as they say, "free, lay (secular), and compulsory." The leaders are intensely opposed to Church control of the schools.

4. In organization the schools follow the French plan rather than the American, the primary grades being comprised within six years, four called "elementary" and two called "superior." Since they were left to the initiative of the local authorities, the schools do not cover the field and vary much in excellence. Some cities have fairly good schools, but the majority of the country schools are poor. The instruction is generally limited to the three R's, and is very indifferently given by poorly trained teachers from the lower orders of society. It is safe to say that three-fourths of the people of Mexico are still illiterate.

5. Mexico has nothing that corresponds to our high school. The *institutos* resemble the French lycées rather than our American high schools. They may be roughly described as a combination of grammar school, high school, and the first two years of college, with a few professional studies included. Opposition to the Church has led the State authorities to oppose the introduction of Latin and to substitute in its place modern languages and elementary science, with the result that the courses are very superficial. In addition to the *institutos* are what are called "preparatory schools," hardly distinguishable from the lower grades of the *institutos* which give instruction in elementary and secondary branches.

6. Normal schools have been established in most of the States, and are attended for the most part by poor boys and girls. It is unfortunate that, owing to the prevalent aristocratic feeling, the sons and daughters of the well-to-do do not go into the teaching profession, with the result that it is looked down upon. One reason for this is that the pay is small and the sons of the rich expect to enter more lucrative callings, but another reason is that the Church frowns upon the secular normal school as the foundation of the whole irreligious public school system, which is to her anathema. This pressure on the conscience of the religious, combined with social ostracism, results ultimately in limiting the attendance to the poorest classes of youth, who, with nothing to lose, brave all and go to the State normal schools.

7. The universities in Mexico owe their origin entirely to the Church. The one of chief importance was the University of the City of Mexico, established in 1551. Opened in 1553, it continued throughout the colonial period and barely survived the revolution of 1810-21. From the beginning it was occupied primarily with theology and jurisprudence, its faculty of letters being secondary. As the Church ceased to dominate the government theology was dropped, and only law and medicine remained. When later these schools controlled the professional licenses, they became the football of politics. In this way the University fell into disrepute. Once or twice it was suppressed, and finally it was dissolved into its constituent parts, separate schools of medicine and law. One of the last acts of the Diaz Administration was an attempt to revive the University of Mexico City, which, however, failed during the subsequent confusion.

What can we say in conclusion? There must be a way for the Mexican people out of their terrible situation. What is their duty, and what is our duty as their neighbor? It would be foolish indeed to propose, at this time especially, a solution of the problem of Mexico, but it is not foolish to try to learn what their history teaches with regard to their needs and their aspirations.

The Mexicans must have, not only land, but an education. Though he has been struggling in his blind way for liberty for a hundred years, for the want of intelligence and of character he has failed to secure his freedom. A thorough system of schools which shall provide universal education is, without question, the greatest need of Mexico.

Does the proposal of universal education for Mexico seem absurd? Why is it more absurd than the proposal to educate the Cuban, the Porto Rican, and the Filipino? It should not be more hopeless than the education of the Indian or the negro. No doubt it will require a long time even to establish the necessary schools. It will be the work of generations to qualify the thirteen million ignorant people for intelligent citizenship, but education offers the only method of making men fit to be free.

Believing that the Mexico of the future must be built by its people, and that they have little to contribute to its structure but their native intellectual and spiritual abilities, I have sought to get a just estimate of them from those who know them best. A native Mexican who was educated in Massachusetts and who has taught in the United States as well as his own country, where he was head of a large college and superintendent of public schools of a State, assures me that the Mexican peon is the equal intellectually of the Italian, the Hungarian, or any of the other immigrants among us, and fully as capable of self-government. A Protestant missionary teacher, who spent thirty years in Mexico at the head of schools, and is now connected with one of our universities, testifies that the Mexican peon has all the



qualities to make a citizen of a republic if he were only educated and given a place on the land. The superintendent of one of the large petroleum companies of Mexico, who has used the peon men for ten years, tells me that they are as teachable, industrious, faithful, and loyal mechanics and laborers as any men he has ever employed. The president of the largest Mexican railway system, who has employed these people for twenty years—as track laborers, shop mechanics, locomotive-drivers, and conductors, as well as depot agents and clerks—is warm in his praise of the common Mexican, who, he declares, needs only an education and a chance. Many other witnesses might be cited to the same effect. In the course of a wide inquiry into the character of these people, the only pessimists found were among business and professional men in Texas, New Mexico, and California, who have come in contact with the worst types of Mexicans—the poor laborer seeking work, the border trader, usually a smuggler, or the cattle thief and bandit. Those who know him best and in his own country believe the common Mexican has in him the making of a man and a citizen.

In addition to elementary education and training for citizenship, Mexicans, of all men, need industrial and agricultural education. Although Father Hidalgo started his revolution in protest against interference with his industrial schools for the people, schools of this type have made little progress. They are the great need. Agriculture in Mexico and the mechanic arts are very primitive. The rich man objects to manual labor as beneath his dignity. Technical and industrial schools are needed to overcome this sentiment. Practically nothing has been done for agricultural education. In view of the richness of the soil and the other resources and the need of men to develop them, industrial and agricultural education would seem to be one of the most important tasks before the Mexican people.

Mexico has no college or university of the modern type. She needs intelligent leaders, but she has no institution to train them. One of the best possible things, therefore, that could be done in Mexico, while helping her to start her elementary, agricultural, and industrial schools, would be to give her an independent modern college of the type of Robert College, of Constantinople. The advantages that would accrue to Mexico from a college of that type are too evident to need argument. Its influence on education, on politics, on industry, and on morals would be all the greater because of its independence. Only such an institution can train Mexicans in a way to make them into the wise, unselfish, and independent leaders the people need.

We have pledged ourselves to stand with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere in making democracy a workable principle of government. Close to our doors we have fifteen millions of people who, through ignorance and the habits that come of ignorance, have failed to differentiate liberty from license and have subordinated federalism to factionalism. Mexico cannot have a free and ordered government so long as the great



masses of its people are illiterate. A democracy must be based on an organized public opinion, and such a public opinion can be made possible only through a system of education which, while it trains in the industrial arts, also disciplines the character and develops leaders of scope and vision. The best aid to a man is to help him help himself. Our best aid to Mexico would be to help that nation train itself.

In the wretched situation in which we find Mexico at the present time there is one encouraging element. In their dark night there is one bright star. It is the star which through the long and weary night of the last hundred years has ever beckoned them forward. This star is their desire for liberty and for education. In spite of their ignorance, stupidity, and brutality, this is the one thing for which we must admire the common people of Mexico. Through a century of struggle they have nurtured this desire for education, and have been true to this ideal of self-government. However miserable their present plight, and however outrageous their recent conduct, we must believe that, holding stronger than ever to this desire and this ideal, the people of Mexico are to-day nearer to the realization of their aspirations than ever before.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 829 027 3